

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-10 OMB-01 AID-05 SAM-01

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SIL-01 TRSE-00 AGR-05 PC-01 ACDA-05 /104 W

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FM AMCONSUL LUANDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3706

INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

CINCLANT NORFOLK VA

CINCEUR VAIHINGEN VER

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUANDA 0796

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT AO MILI

SUBJECT: MPLA'S BLOCKADE

CINCLANT AND CINCEUR FOR POLAD'S

REF: A) LUANDA 0790; B) LUANDA 0756

1. DURING A JUNE 17 CONVERSATION, TRANSITION GOVERNMENT
SECRETARY GENERAL GONCALVES RIBIERO (HIGH COMMISSIONER'S
NUMBER TWO MAN, A PORTUGUESE ARMY COLONEL) AGAIN CONFIRMED MPLA'S
INCREASINGLY EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF THE AREA NORTH OF LUANDA
(REFTELS). MORE IMPORTANT, HE WENT ON TO DESCRIBE A SIDE
EFFECT OF THIS CONTROL THAT WE HAD FAILED TO CONSIDER, THAT
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MPLA IS NOW PREVENTING NORTHWARD MOVEMENT OF FOODSTUFFS

VITAL TO BOTH FNLA TROOPS AND BAKONGO CIVILIANS. THE NORTH'S MEAT, RICE, BEANS AND OTHER FOOD ITEMS COME FROM THE SOUTH VIA LUANDA. ALL POL PRODUCTS ARE SUPPLIED FROM HERE ALSO. IN ADDITION TO AFFECTING FNLA'S ABILITY TO OPERATE MILITARILY, GONCALVES RIBIERO FEELS MPLA'S BLOCKADE WILL CAUSE TROUBLE BETWEEN FNLA AND BOTH ITS NORTHERN WHITE ALLIES (MAINLY LARGE SCALE COFFEE PLANTERS) AND BLACK CIVILIAN SYMPATHIZERS. THIS WILL OCCUR AS FNLA IS DRIVEN TO SEIZING FOODSTOCKS FROM WHEREVER THEY CAN BE FOUND, FROM CIVILIANS, BLACK AND WHITE. THE PORTUGUESE CLAIM LITTLE FOOD AND NO FUEL IS COMING IN FROM ZAIRE, WHICH THEY ATTRIBUTE TO ZAIREN ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. THE SECGEN PREDICTS THE BEGINNING OF STARVATION IN THE NORTH WITHIN TWO WEEKS IF MPLA DOESN'T RELENT.

2. GONCALVES RIBIERO IS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE KENYA SUMMIT ACHIEVING ANYTHING LASTING. HIS VIEW IS THAT ROBERTO AND NETO ARE "TWO LIONS, ONE HAS TO TRIUMPH COMPLETELY". SAVIMBI, HE FEELS, CANNOT CONTINUE INDEFINITELY HIS BALANCING ACT, AT SOME POINT UNITA MUST JOIN ONE OR THE OTHER. HOWEVER, LIKE EVERYONE ELSE HERE, HE CAN'T SAY HOW MUCH STRING SAVIMBI HAS LEFT.

3. LIKE THE HIGH COMMISSIONER AND SOME OTHER PORTUGUESE OFFICERS, GONCALVES RIBIERO FEELS THE PORTUGUESE HAVE A MORAL OBLIGATION TO STOP THE VIOLENCE. HOWEVER, THEY DON'T HAVE A GO-AHEAD FROM LISBON. (DURING THE LAST ROUND, COPLAD CHIEF ALMENDERA SAID PRIVATELY HE WISHED IT WOULD DEGENERATE EVEN FURTHER SO THAT HE'D BE GIVEN A FREE HAND. IT DIDN'T AND HE WASN'T.)

4. COMMENT: THE PROBLEM IS NOT JUST A GREEN LIGHT FROM LISBON, MORE IMPORTANT IT IS THE UNWILLINGNESS OF A MAJORITY OF PORTUGUESE TROOPS TO ACT IF THAT ENTAILS A SUBSTANTIAL RISK TO THEIR OWN SAFETY. ALSO, LOGISTICALLY THE PORTUGUESE ARMY IS PHASING OUT AND PACKING UP.

5. PESSIMISM ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF REAL PROGRESS TOWARDS A SOLUTION FROM THE SUMMIT IS PERVERSIVE HERE ALTHOUGH MANY FEEL THE MEETING IN KENYA WILL PROVIDE A SUBSTANTIAL BREATHING SPELL. THERE IS OCCASIONALLY A PRO-FORMA OPTIMISM
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EXPRESSED BY PORTUGUESE AUTHORITIES AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS (FOR EXAMPLE, THE SECGEN SAID, "FOR THE RECORD I'M HOPEFUL, HOWEVER" AND WENT ON TO EXPLAIN HIS REAL FEELINGS) AND PRESS SPECULATION IS REQUIRED TO BE OPTIMISTIC.

6. SAVIMBI IS TAKING SOME CRITICISM FOR NOT JOINING THE FRAY, AT LEAST TO AVENGE THE MPLA ATROCITIES. HE APPEARS, HOWEVER, TO BE PLAYING IT CORRECTLY FOR NOW. UNITA'S

POWER IS STILL INSUFFICIENT TO TIP THE SCALES, THE
POSSIBILITY OF AN FNLA-UNITA MILITARY SWEEP, WHILE IT ONCE
EXISTED, IS GONE FOR NOW. SAVIMBI MUST SIT BACK, TRAIN HIS
ARMY AND WATCH FNLA AND MPLA CHEW ON EACH OTHER. A
POSSIBLE DANGER FOR UNITA, HOWEVER, IS THAT ONE OF THEM -
MOST LIKELY MPLA - WILL EFFECTIVELY DEFEAT ITS
RIVAL IN A RELATIVELY SHORT TIME AND, TEMPERED BY THE COMBAT
EXPERIENCE, TURN ON UNITA AND THE SOUTH. THIS DOES NOT
APPEAR A SERIOUS THREAT, THOUGH, SINCE "DEFEAT" FOR FNLA, IF
IT HAPPENS, MEANS ONLY BEING DRIVEN COMPLETELY BACK INTO
BAKONGO TERRITORY (ZAIRE AND UIGE DISTRICTS) FROM WHERE IT
PRESUMABLY COULD LICK ITS WOUNDS AND FORAY AGAINST MPLA-HELD
TERRITORY. EVEN SUCH A WEAKENED FNLA WOULD PROBABLY OCCUPY
MPLA ENOUGH TO PREVENT AN INVASION OF THE SOUTH ON A SCALE
UNITA COULD NOT HANDLE.
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